

# UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

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TEACHING is not a lost art but the regard for it is a lost tradition. Hence tomorrow's problem will not be to get teachers, but to recognize the good ones and not discourage them before they have done their stint.

- Jacques Barzun.

Having had a rural upbringing and mindful of those morning chores demanded of that background - teaching has always seemed to me like attending milk cows - you must always be there to milk them. And so with the teacher who must always be present whether the students are or not. If one does not enjoy this tedious and demanding profession it can be a real drag. There was a time when the teacher was a respected member of the community but today this is questionable. One must admit there are odd-ball teachers as there are in every profession. But I shall speak entirely about the dedicated teacher and especially those involved in the Arts. The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds and guiding them into acquiring some knowledge or skill. Assuming that the teacher can command authority and has an abundant peripheral knowledge on his subject he is ready to face the trials and tribulations of furthering the education of his students. For those confronting the teacher the words 'school' and 'discipline' are synonymous. Without discipline no intelligent progress can be expected.

The Master teacher of Ballet at an artistic level works with an infinitely complex object - the human being. If the Master is a great teacher he is creative in the full sense of the word and out of his teaching comes a characteristic work of art - a person. The student is his creation. What are his feelings about the various possibilities in the profession as to what may happen to his creation? At the end of this article the reader may decide for himself.

It is a mistake for the teacher to dwell too much on making the student creative. It is the teacher who must be creative. Quite naturally the student cannot be creative without knowledge and an alphabet of working material. Unless this is taught first the result can be sheer disaster. It is a false idea that creativity is lost with a sound technical training. However the stress must not be one hundred percent on technique. There must be moments when the imagination is left to run rampant.

In this profession it is not uncommon for the ballet master to have a pupil over a period of from 6 to 10 years and quite naturally there develops a teacher-student relationship that has more influence and meaning than blood relationship. The teacher becomes a parent by proxy. He opens doors to new worlds - the world of music - of painting and of literature. Taste is formed and ambitions fired and guided. Unseen and unsuspected talents are brought out through his understanding and encouragement. It is astonishing how much the teacher learns and understands unconsciously from instructing a student that the psychiatrist may never discover.

From the first it is important there be a mutual feeling of respect and rapport between the teacher and the student. Without doubt the FIRST instructor has the responsibility of making or breaking a promising career. It will be the good or the bad working habits that he or she manages to instill in his embryonic subject that will make the difference. Bad habits are like the tuberculosis germ - they are always there however dormant. Good habits give the master teacher a solid foundation on which to build.

Regard for the teacher and recognition of his accomplishments are not among the traits of the average American's character. He feels - wrongly - he has arrived at success through



personal efforts alone. This may have been true a century ago but modern life is so complex that there are many influences behind every successful person. Each teacher, one comes in contact with, adds something to an increasingly complex person - yourself.

In an early Bulletin - November, 1968 - I wrote an article entitled "Twenty-two teachers". All twenty-two made a marked influence on my life and personality and anyone admitting the truth could do the same.

Faced with a class of thirty or more aspiring students - all different and unique in themselves - the teacher of ballet soon becomes ware of his position on the battlefield. Each subject "thinks" he would like to become a dancer but will he be persuadable - willingly to endure hard work - the criticism - the disappointments and heartache that go with it to become better than the average dancer. All ballet aspirants including children today come with many preconceived ideas and impressions of what they think about themselves - their own potential - of their body qualifications that their teachableness is practically nil. However the teacher is forced to proceed with stubborn determination. At the end of the first year if he has reached ten out of the thirty he has done amazingly well.

There are advantages in having taught over a half century that soften the disappointments in those pupils who had great natural gifts and yet fell by the wayside. At least one can be happy that they turned out into respectable and intelligent people in another profession. Always carrying over much that you gave them into their newly chosen profession. Former Stone-Camryn pupils have become doctors - lawyers - designers - actors - singers - musicians - teachers - directors - psychologists - and even ministers, nuns, and priests. Naturally everyone who studies dance will not become a dancer (more people study dance than any other subject in American). Wanting to and having an aptitude (and the breaks) for dance are two different things.

In dealing with young folks one is often confronted with every type of devilment - annoyances - misfortune and tragedy. Sometimes, self-inflicted and at other times it can be just one of life's dirty tricks. In fifty years all cannot be rosy dealing with a variety of odd happenings. Often it can be difficult to decide what procedure one should take. For instance,

we had a talented girl with nymphomaniac tendencies who drove an equally talented boy out of the school - never to be heard of again. Needless to say she was asked to leave the school. I can only recall three instances where we have had to expel someone from out of the school because of bad behavior. Tossing someone out is good therapy for the behavior of the others. Occasionally, we lose a pupil because of a domineering parent. Betty B. was indeed a promising student who ran away with a sailor to avoid home rule. She ended up having too many children. One of our dearest pupils of all time Marie Gurrere - died shortly after her 21st birthday from surjury on a brain tumor. Her parents had refused permission to have an operation, so when she became of age she took it upon herself. It was too late by this time. In 1951, the school had three serious cases of Polio - Billy Alberts, Susan Furlong, and Lillian Dea. Billy and Susan became wheelchair cases and Lillian with a fused back was able to dance somewhat. At about the same time a young child had a fatal case of sleeping sickness. A real scare was finding Bill Gatewood in a diabetetic coma in the dressing room. We sent him to the hospital in his tights. Religion has confiscated some of our best talent in the past. Jehovah's Witnesses - nuns - and priests have taken their toll. One very young boy in ballet class when asked what he was going to be when he grew up, spoke up - "A Catholic Priest." Years later we did attend his first mass in Oak Park. Another older boy who professed to be a 'love-child' became a Methodist Minister in the southwest. Two frustrated boys went out by suicide - one 18, the other in his late 40's. All of which does not tell all that might be told but does give some idea of a side of a teacher's life not often thought about.

The unpleasant occurrences are overshadowed by some of the good things that happen as well - like Hassard Short the Broadway producer, taking four boys out of our school (and just out of High School) to dance in a Broadway show. The boys were Bill Reilly, Jim Moore, John sharp and Darrell Notara. We felt especially good about it because the show only required six and four were ours (with no union cards). For a number of years (during the De Mille era) there was hardly a Broadway show without one or several SC dancers. James Jamieson began the circle in "Oklahoma" and "Brigadoon" with many of our girls and boys in the casts up even to the Bob Fosse shows. Early ballet stars from SC were John Kriza and Ruth Ann Koesun with world fame. Kelly Brown

could have had it had he not resigned in favor of Musicals and the movies. Charles Bennett had a few illustrious years as the First Chamber Dance Quartet and has settled in the Seattle area. Along came John Neumeier from Father Walsh's dramatic department at Marquette University commuting for four years (2 to 4 times a week) studying and dancing in SC productions. He has reached world fame for his choreography. Sheila Reilly head of the dance department at Marquette University and the Interlochen Summer dance camp is one of some thirty odd teachers about the country with SC backgrounds. What more could one ask than to have spawned such beautiful dancers as Dolores Lipinski, Naomi Sorkin, Karen Tims, Lauren Rouse and Peggy Lyman? They are what makes teaching a joy - that is our reward.

For many years the school's slogan has been - "teaching with an uncompromising teaching discipline" - we think it has paid off many times over. The following quote I have always liked - the author is unknown - "A good teacher has three rules in teaching; He talks realistically, he convinces students that he is genuinely interested in them, and he makes it clear that he'll break their blooming necks if they don't work."

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The past season (September on) has blown away so rapidly that it hardly seems we lived through it. After losing our usual summer vacation and only getting a 'shortie' at Christmas in Jamaica - and with no great problems with winter (however long) the months fell off the calendar like water off a duck's back. Here we are facing our 39th consecutive summer course. This year we offer two alumni on the teaching staff. PEGGY LYMAN who is an important part of the Martha Graham Dance Company and JULIE WALDER who toured for many years with the Gus Giordana Jazz Group. It is befitting to their popularity that at this early date further registration is closed...as are many of the ballet classes.

As of August first we do get a vacation and it will be spent all in Portugal. As of September first, we will be back at the registration desk for another year.

Another casualty of this year was the usual spring concerts which instead will be December 5th, 6th, and 7th at St. Alphonsus. Rehearsals are in progress and will continue through the summer.

At the beginning of the fifth term JOAN GREGOR and JOHN SHARP returned to the fold. Joan had been with the Colorado Concert Dance group since last fall and John with the Cincinnati Ballet where he was on trial. However he came back with a contract for next season. Digging into the past we run into two names - MARY FORMOLA and KATHERINE POSIN - both modern bent with much success in their field of choreography. Mary chose Canada and has been pioneering in Saskatchewan in the city of Regina. She has had considerable funding from the Canadian Arts Council and now has a company called the Regina Modern Dance Works and will be appearing next season at Rosary College. Katherine Posin, a pupil of the school from 1958 to 1964 has become more and more prominent as a choreographer in the various Modern companies. She recently completed one for the Alvin Ailey Company. It is rumored that the Milwaukee Ballet is in trouble and that ROBERTA REHBERG BOARSE has resigned as its head. Roberta was the brain child at its inception. She and the Company recently had a featured article in the Dance Magazine. A very pleasant surprise was the recent visit of BILL MALONEY for several days. He has resided in New York now for many years teaching for the Uta Hagen Dramatic School and at Adelphia College. Just as I finished typing that last line, who should walk in the door but lovely DONNA MILLS for a visit. She has not been back in Chicago since her TV career began away back in the 60's. Now living in Los Angeles she is engaged in making movies for TV - has bought her own home and does not look a day older than when we had her in class. Some of the nicest compliments come on Christmas cards. What BUD TYGETT wrote on his is worth using to end this Bulletin - "How lucky a whole generation of Chicagoans have been. People forget, fame and fortune are bestowed capriciously and even simple appreciation is not to be counted on, but as you consider the body of work you have created, you can certainly count your time well spent. For me, at least, the memories are happy and precious."

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